

BUCKLAND BEACON AND THE NEW TERRITORIES 11th July 99

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The Sunday ramblers walk of about 8 miles was organised by Helen Rowett and we once again all benefited from her vast experience of walking Dartmoor. To find the reason for the term new territories, read on!

The Sunday 11th July 99 was a beautiful day, lightish winds, very warm and not a cloud in the sky. 26 of us made it to the start point of Cold East Cross CP, about 6 miles due north of Ashburton. Joy and I found it eventually but not without the now normal navigational screw up; it wouldn't be the same excitement if we could just arrive without touring the local area first.

At 1030 AM after a few announcements we made our way across relatively level terrain to a landmark one mile southwest of the CP known as Buckland Beacon.

In addition to the splendid views from the beacon, (why isn't it called a TOR, every other granite outcrop is) it is noted for its engraved stones, there is a plaque describing the beacon and a much older one with the ten commandments on it.



We took our morning coffee break here and then we were off again, initially almost retracing our steps but soon we were dropping down east across Rushlade Common until we came to an unusual modern clapper bridge.

We continued south eastwards parallel to a road for a short distance until we turned north east to enter newly granted access across previously prohibited land.



Apparently this access was as a result of the recent freedom to roam legislation coupled with the death of the farmer who refused to grant permission hitherto.

We continued north east through a now disused rifle range which stimulated an interchange of views between those of us with a service background, we were the modern variant of Dads (and Mums) Army!!

One could easily tell that this was newly granted access, the footpath was very overgrown with

bracken and it will need lots more walkers over it before it becomes recognisable as a footpath. We continued along this route for about a mile, until we found the shade of a lovely old copse. Lunch was taken beneath the shade of the low branches of a chestnut tree, although opinions were somewhat divided as to the exact species.

After a half an hour break we were off again with a steep northerly uphill section of a good mile. It certainly raised the pulse rate and the temperature particularly as machetes could have been profitably



used for the first section of it. We found a recognisable path which eased our plight and we were able to get our breath back as we reached Horridge Common.

There were splendid views from this point of at least three Tors, Rippon, Saddle and the very popular one of Haytor. We were offered the opportunity of a yomp up to the top of Rippon Tor or a more leisurely walk following the contours around to the other side.



The majority of us decided to venture up the steepish climb through the scrub, with no recognisable path to the Tor. Jack led the way and was joined by Maurice with the rest of us very spread out as we made the ascent.

We gathered for a photo opportunity at the top and then we were off again down a very steep descent to a road junction. We found that the others who had decided on the leisurely route found it far from leisurely as their path just evaporated and they too were faced with the difficult Dartmoor scrub. We gathered together at the bottom and were told it wasn't the plan to have a coffee break here but at the top of Top Tor about half a mile up a northwest climb.

Luckily it was much easier than Rippon Tor as access had been always there and as a result the paths were clearly defined. It was now getting very warm in the heat of the afternoon and the break was most welcome. We were soon heading off west and into the sun making our way to the next Tor, Pil Tor.



We could see the car park in the distance, about a mile or so downhill south east. Apparently there was an old bronze age settlement just below us, known as Foales Arrishes Settlement, probably after the archaeologist who had discovered it.

We made it down hill avoiding a mire and soon we were back to the car park after a very pleasant 8 mile romp in the heat. Not many dogs today but the three who went were certainly very thirsty by the end. Unfortunately no ice cream van to cool us down.

I was advised of the direct route to get back to the A38, rather easier than the theoretically shorter one that we had almost followed in the morning. After a quick blast down the A38 we were home again by 4PM to bake on the patio for an hour. For the first time this summer I took a cold shower to get rid of all the sweat that the walking had generated.

Certainly makes a change from sailing and lots more exercise too. Joy was right !!!!